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ABSTRACT

This book describes a model program to help rehabilitation professionals work more effectively with employers when placing disabled employees in private-sector jobs. It also identifies successful strategies for increasing job opportunities for disabled persons. Chapter 1 overviews the Employer Accounts Strategy, an approach for negotiating career options for disabled workers that involves a partnership between an employer and a rehabilitation professional. The next four chapters cover the four stages of creating employment opportunities through employer accounts. Chapter 2 considers two important areas of preliminary research that make prospecting for employer accounts more efficient and productive: determining agencies, bargaining positions and rating employers' qualifications as accounts. Organizing information to launch an account strategy toward selected, qualified employers is considered in chapter 3. Topics are understanding negotiations, how to sort selling points, and research and the first contact script. Chapter 4 discusses the importance of ensuring good first impressions related to establishing personal credibility, the credibility of one's agency, and the credibility of one's clients. Chapter 5 covers two vital aspects of presenting a case--setting up the first appointment and discussing the program opportunities. (YLB)

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EMPLOYERS AS PARTNERS

By
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Representatives from The Times Mirror Company, the California Department of Rehabilitation, and the California Institute on Human Services review the handbook Employers as Partners as part of a collaborative project to increase job opportunities for persons with disabilities.

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Preface

In a unique partnership between the private sector and state government, The Times Mirror Company, the California Department of Rehabilitation, and the California Institute on Human Services of Sonoma State University sponsored a major project to facilitate the employment of persons with disabilities. This project, titled "Jobs for Persons with Disabilities," was created during the International Year of Disabled Persons and was designed to help disabled persons become more self-reliant, active members of society.

During this collaborative effort, the partners developed a model program to help government and community service agencies work more effectively with employers when placing disabled employees in private sector jobs. This book describes the model program and identifies successful strategies for increasing job opportunities for the disabled in the private sector.

The Institute extends its heartfelt appreciation to the individuals who managed this collaborative effort between public and private enterprise for their assistance and patience throughout the evolution of this book. They are Suzanne Campi for The Times Mirror Company in Los Angeles and Donna Mandelstam for the California Department of Rehabilitation.

A group of Department of Rehabilitation front-line personnel in the greater Los Angeles area reviewed various drafts and met in feedback sessions with the author. Those individuals are: Rick Cassedy, Wan Chang, Veronica Graff, Arturo Irizarry, Pam Sanchez, and Lesley Siegel. The generosity, thoughtfulness, and constructive attention to detail offered so freely by these very busy people was more than the Institute had a right to expect.

Although not accountable for errors of interpretation, two highly competent employment developers made substantial contributions to the book's orientation and content. They are Marianne Roche, a private consultant from Philadelphia, and Gerald Good, a program supervisor in the Santa Ana branch of the California Department of Rehabilitation. The Institute sincerely appreciates these two extraordinary and generous professionals.

Finally, special thanks to Carol Iddins and Peter Lichtgarn for their editorial assistance.

Tony Apollo

Tony Apollo i, Ph.D
Director, California Institute
on Human Services

Table of Contents

1 THE EMPLOYER ACCOUNTS STRATEGY 1

WHO IS THIS BOOK FOR? 2
PURSUING THE EMPLOYER ACCOUNTS STRATEGY . . 2
MAJOR STEPS IN THE EMPLOYER ACCOUNTS STRATEGY 3

2 PROSPECTING FOR EMPLOYER ACCOUNTS 4

DETERMINING YOUR AGENCY'S BARGAINING POSITION 5
Strategic Results of Employer Accounts 5
Gauging Your Agency's Competence and Commitment . 6
RATING EMPLOYER QUALIFICATIONS 7
Employer Selection Criteria 8
How Much Research is Enough? 12
Resources for Useful Information 12

3 PREPARING YOUR CASE 13

UNDERSTANDING NEGOTIATIONS 14
Types of Negotiations 14
Anticipation Reduces Surprises 16
HOW TO SORT YOUR SELLING POINTS 16
An Analogy From Sales 16
But A Client Isn't A Turtle 17
Employer Accounts: A General List of Selling Points 18
RESEARCH AND THE FIRST CONTACT SCRIPT 20
An Organizing Tool for Tailor-Made Presentations 20
For Your Eyes Only 23

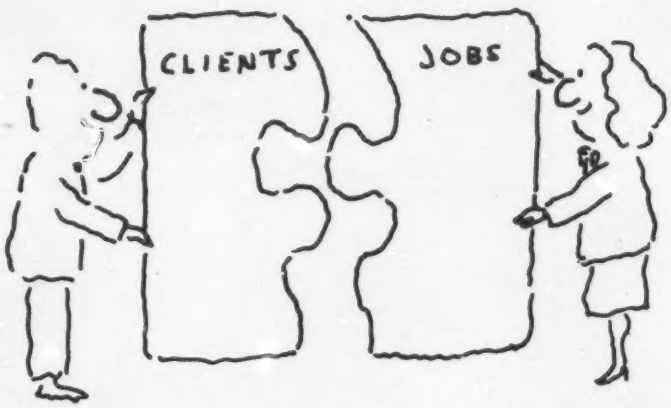
4 INSURING GOOD FIRST IMPRESSIONS 24

ESTABLISHING YOUR PERSONAL CREDIBILITY 25
Reading 25
Training 27
Observation 27
ESTABLISHING THE CREDIBILITY OF YOUR AGENCY . 28
ESTABLISHING THE CREDIBILITY OF YOUR CLIENTS . 29
Who's the Competition? 30
Subtle (Mis)Interpretations 31

5 PRESENTING YOUR CASE: THE FIRST ENCOUNTER 32

SETTING UP THE FIRST APPOINTMENT 33
Tools for Arranging the First Appointment 33
Person to Contact First 34
MAKING YOUR PITCH 35
Preparations for Making the First Pitch 35
The First Meeting 39
THE DOOR IS OPEN! WHAT NOW? 41

BIBLIOGRAPHY 42



1
The Employer Accounts Strategy

The Employer Accounts Strategy is an approach for negotiating career options for people with disabilities that involves a partnership between an employer and a rehabilitation professional. Utilizing methods developed in the fields of marketing and sales, rehabilitation counselors meet the needs of both employers, who want trained and capable employees, and clients with disabilities, who want meaningful jobs in mainstream settings. The strategy emphasizes the establishment of mutually beneficial arrangements in which a rehabilitation agency offers a package of services to an employer in exchange for improved employment opportunities for the agency's clients.

I went to school to learn how to help people. Back then, I didn't want to know anything about "business." Later on, when it became necessary to accomplish my goals by working through high-powered executives who control the kind of jobs I wanted for our clients, I knew I was a babe in the woods. It was very scary at first, believe me.

Marianne Roche

WHO IS THIS BOOK FOR?

If Marianne Roche's reminiscence about a period of apprehension in her career strikes home, this book was written for you. The employer accounts strategy is being used by people like Roche to open doors to new job opportunities for their clients by building a mutually beneficial partnership between an employer (private or public) and a rehabilitation agency. The rehabilitation agency offers a package of services to an employer—one of the agency's "accounts"—in exchange for employment opportunities for the agency's clients.

PURSUING THE EMPLOYER ACCOUNTS STRATEGY

Successful application of the Employer Accounts Strategy involves careful preparation and skilled negotiation on the part of the representative of a rehabilitation agency. Rehabilitation professionals need to have clearly in mind what they want and what they have to offer. This involves defining agency and client goals, and knowing what needed services can be offered to employers. Prospective employers must be screened to determine the presence or absence of factors that are potentially valuable to clients, e.g., the availability of opportunities for upward mobility, employment training programs, and union assistance to employees with disabilities. Familiarity with each employer's field and products and with the various types of negotiations that may occur with a prospective employer are essential for developing employer accounts.

The Employer Accounts Strategy is a bridge between the world of business and the world of rehabilitation, a vital link between clients who want, need, and are prepared for jobs, and employers who have jobs and training to offer appropriate employees. With careful preparation and forethought, rehabilitation professionals can facilitate partnerships that make it possible to successfully meet the needs of both employers and disabled job seekers.

If you are pursuing the employer accounts strategy for the first time, it may be some consolation to know someone has paved the way. Among her many roles, Marianne Roche teaches other people the skills needed to manipulate business environments in the best interest of their clients. To go from "a babe in the woods" to persuading hard-nosed executives to open good jobs to people with severe disabilities, Roche required a lot of self-directed study, trial, error, and nerve. But throughout the process, she hasn't forsaken her original motivations. She is still reinforced by helping people. Marianne Roche, perhaps like you, found that she had to add new skills to her repertoire to help her be more effective in a changing role.

The employer accounts strategy anticipates the employer's requirements that the agency can satisfy. The most important employer need, and a need the rehabilitation agency has the capacity to meet, is assistance in hiring employees who are motivated, trained, and qualified.

In addition to providing its employer accounts with help in recruiting capable employees (who happen to be the agency's clients), the package recognizes that employers may also need other services, such as:

- consultation on affirmative action and non-discrimination hiring policies and practices;
- help acquiring special tax incentives and wage subsidies;
- consultation on job modifications;
- advice on barrier removal;
- disability awareness training for employees; and,
- help with "troubled employees" among the employer's current work force.

The notion underlying the employer accounts strategy isn't at all new in the world of business. In fact, the approach is comparable to a large computer manufacturer offering school teachers free programming classes on its own equipment. Obviously, the manufacturer hopes this inducement will lead teachers to request their district administrators to purchase the models the teachers recognize. Is the cost of providing these classes worth it? It all depends, of course, on how many additional computers the manufacturer sells to school districts.

Similarly, the worth of the employer accounts strategy depends on a trade-off. Does the tie in with other employer-required services improve the agency's ability to arrange more jobs for its clients?

A serious pursuit of the employer accounts strategy requires rehabilitation services agents to adopt new and unfamiliar attitudes and patterns of behavior.

So, if you are a competent rehabilitation professional who has volunteered to pursue employer accounts, and you feel somewhat apprehensive about adapting your role, this book will provide useful information and advice.

MAJOR STEPS IN THE EMPLOYER ACCOUNTS STRATEGY

This book covers the first four stages of creating employment opportunities through employer accounts:

Prospecting For Accounts

Preparing Your Case

Insuring Good First Impressions

Presenting Your Case

Key issues are woven through the discussion of these steps. For example, making a positive impact on employers' "awareness," understanding, and appreciation of employees with disabilities is presented as a by-product of your personal style, marketing techniques, and the quality of the services you provide or arrange.

We encourage you to adopt a marketing and sales frame of reference. The orientation presented here will describe what you need to think about to create changes that will develop career options for your clients and shift your role from supplicant to negotiator in a balanced, mutually beneficial relationship.

2
Prospecting for Employer Accounts

In this chapter, we cover two important areas of preliminary "research" that will make prospecting for employer accounts more efficient and productive in the long run. Those areas are:

- determining your agency's bargaining position, and,
- rating employers' qualifications as accounts

Lord, grant me that I may always desire more than I can accomplish.

Michelangelo (1475–1564)

Our plans miscarry because they have no aim. When a man does not know what harbor he is making for, no wind is the right wind.

Seneca (4 B.C.–A.D. 65)

DETERMINING YOUR AGENCY'S BARGAINING POSITION

There are two fundamental ingredients in determining any bargaining position: knowing what you want, and knowing what you can offer to obtain it. It is important to maintain a list of desired results in mind. While you ponder where to aim your recruitment effort, this list of anticipated goals will help you prepare a flexible negotiation posture with the greatest likelihood for success.

STRATEGIC RESULTS OF EMPLOYER ACCOUNTS

Being conscious of a range of results will allow you to ask some important questions during the course of research and negotiation. For example:

- Would it be reasonable to expect more new jobs for your clients if certain other outcomes were obtained?
- Conversely, would fewer jobs be acceptable if one or more of the other outcomes fell into place?

This line of thinking is one that good salespeople follow in advance of important negotiations.

Like a good salesperson, you will be thinking about all the valuable outcomes from your vantage point. There may be results you can trade off and still achieve your agency's goals. What, then, might you expect from an employer accounts strategy?

GOOD JOBS FOR CLIENTS

The long-range accomplishment of any employment strategy is an open-ended career for people presently labeled "clients." A well-developed employer account enhances the odds of placing a client in a career position. The strategy gives rehabilitation personnel recurring opportunities to build both employer confidence and an intimate knowledge of employer's organization and operation.

SECONDARY BUT VALUABLE OUTCOMES

One of the powerful advantages of a continuing relationship provided through a successful employer account is that you don't have to lay all your cards on the table at the beginning of negotiations. There may be beneficial outcomes that are better discussed after you've established a track record for competent delivery of services. But that doesn't mean you can't (or shouldn't) think about other employer-assisted outcomes that would advance the long-range strategy of creating job opportunities for people with disabilities.

If good jobs for clients are the cake, the following employer-assisted outcomes can be considered the icing.

Job Analysis and Training. When clients have substantial disabilities or marginal entry qualifications, more extensive job analysis and training at the job site are sometimes required. These services may be available through your agency but are often costly.

An employer organization that has a good internal employee training program and is willing and able to adapt that training to the special needs of your clients can reduce the costs of your agency's participation in the account relationship.

If you believe a target employer has a good training program for its employees, then expanding that training program to incorporate your clients would constitute an important outcome. This might not be as easily achieved under a "one client, one time" job placement approach.

Technical Assistance. One way to reduce the costs of your agency's investment in an account relationship is to obtain technical assistance that might otherwise have to be purchased. Areas of helpful assistance from an employer might include:

- job market forecasts;
- agency staff training (including role playing) on effective communication of the strategy with personnel managers;
- rehabilitation/labor union mediation; and,
- high impact media to carry your strategy message.

Both private and public organizations contain human resources which can be of enormous and diverse assistance for advancing the account strategy. A well-planned and well-timed request for technical assistance from your employer "partner" can result in several positive outcomes: useful new information and skills; a signal that you want to improve the quality of your contribution to the relationship; and communication that you're serious about enhancing your competence in the overall employer accounts strategy.

Account Referrals. When thinking through all the possible accomplishments of the employer accounts strategy, don't forget future relationships. A good account can become a steppingstone to other valuable opportunities. There are a number of ways your account "partner" can help. A sound account can:

- produce leads to other employers;
- generate letters of reference and personal introductions to key individuals in other organizations; and,
- promote your goals and services to wider audiences through public media, presentations to service and professional groups, and testimonials for inclusion in your print media.

Remember, if your account is an influential member of the business community, and if you provide that employer with a valuable service, you may find the employer offering you positive referrals to other potential accounts. Those referrals can, in turn, form a growing network of valuable contacts.

GAUGING YOUR AGENCY'S COMPETENCE AND COMMITMENT

Knowing what you want is only half the task of determining your agency's bargaining position. The other half is knowing what you can offer.

One nightmare is getting caught in a bluff—having the other party to a negotiation discover that the items you've offered look attractive on paper but in fact amount to empty promises. The inability to follow through on offered services is the greatest threat to the success of your strategy.

There are two ways you can be embarrassed while pursuing employer accounts:

- You and your agency are unable to competently deliver the services you brought to the bargaining table; or
- you can't deliver services on a timely basis, even though the capacity exists.

AGENCY COMPETENCE

Examine each item on the menu of services you're about to offer to a prospective employer. At the top of the list, of course, is your promise that you can refer job applicants who are motivated, trained, and qualified for a portion of the jobs the employer may have available. What are the odds you can deliver qualified applicants? If some potential applicants are not yet fully qualified, what are the odds that you have engineering and training competence available to help those persons become qualified?

Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information upon it.

Samuel Johnson (1709–1784)

What about the other items on your menu of services? Do you have capable people available to back you up if an employer requests assistance in areas about which you are not an expert? If your team is weak in a particular position, you'd be wise either not to offer that service or inform an employer that your organization is in the process of developing the capacity to deliver that service.

AGENCY COMMITMENT

Even if your agency has the resource capacity to deliver the services on your bargaining menu, do you have confidence that those resources, including your own time, will be there when you need them? Can you deliver important types of expertise to an employer within a reasonable period of time? There may well be an engineer working out of the central office who knows everything about job site modification. But will there be 50 people in line ahead of you when you need that engineer's help? If there were a heavy demand, would an employer account take priority?

One way an agency demonstrates its commitment to the strategy is through its provision of quality media that help promote the strategy in a business-like fashion. Ill-defined media are not helpful tools.

A rehabilitation agency also demonstrates its commitment by training you to advance the employer accounts strategy. Because this strategy is novel for many agencies, some of the training will be unconventional and available only from sources outside the routine channels.

These are a few of the ways your agency's commitment needs to be analyzed. With respect to present and future job opportunities, much depends upon your ability to deliver promised services to each of your accounts. After all, we're not talking charity to employers anymore; we're talking deals!

RATING EMPLOYER QUALIFICATIONS

Serious prospecting for employer accounts requires an enormous investment of time. Too much is at stake to justify a hit-or-miss recruitment process. Since you represent valuable job seekers and have valuable services to offer, you need to decide which employers are worth exploring as potential accounts.

Identifying employers who qualify as partners in an employer account relationship is largely a regional matter. If you work in a substantially rural area, or in a "company town," your menu of potential accounts will be different than an urban area dense with private and public employers.

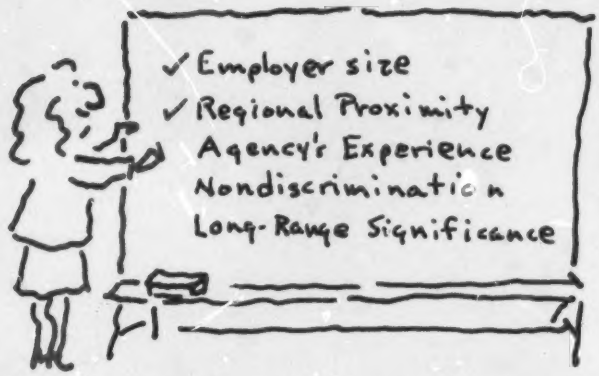
Regardless of your local situation, there are certain criteria you should consider when you think about the kind of account relationship you want and the level of continuing investment it will take. Prospecting for accounts can be time consuming. Yet the more information you have about a prospective employer, the better your chances for success in developing a productive account.

How do you determine the correct amount of research required? How much is too much?

It seems reasonable that you need enough information about an employer to arrive at preliminary answers to two basic questions:

- Could an account with this employer result in jobs for people with disabilities?
- If so, will bringing the employer into an account relationship require a sophisticated and persistent sales approach?

These questions are basic. If the employer is a significant prospect, and if you guess that the employer is not waiting for your offer with open arms, you may need more background information than usual. The answers to these two questions will help you decide whether or not to extend and deepen your research.



We need to backtrack a bit, though, and reconsider qualification criteria and the kinds of information that will help you arrive at the best answers.

EMPLOYER SELECTION CRITERIA

EMPLOYER SIZE

Remember the premise that's at the heart of the employer accounts strategy: your agency trades employer-needed services for job opportunities for your clients. If the employer has a small work force, the cost of providing services may not be worth the investment of time and effort. In the case of employers with small work forces, a sophisticated "one client, one time" job placement approach may be a better strategic choice. Assessing the work force size is essentially a matter of judgment. Some suggest 100 employees as a base for qualifying an employer as "large."

Beyond the cost-benefit issue, there are several other arguments for considering large employers first:

- A large work force is often associated with better potential for economic and status advancement (upward mobility);
- Large employers often have better fringe benefits;
- Large employers are more likely to have organizational units and policies devoted to employee development and training; and,
- Large employers are more likely to be sensitive to internal and external policy influences regarding nondiscriminatory hiring practices.

It's not difficult to find out the number of employees at any given organization. Simply call the employer's personnel office and say that you're doing a survey for [your agency's name]—which you are—and would like to know the number of the organization's regular, full-time employees. If you're dealing with a locally-based branch of a larger organization, you'll want to be sure the employee count you are given distinguishes the people employed within your agency's region.

Another important size factor, especially if you're thinking of a branch office or a corporate subsidiary, will be the size of the total organization and the complexity of its organizational structure. The more people you have to deal with, and the more people who need to approve your strategy, the more complicated and time-consuming your task becomes.

But because the long-range benefits of an account relationship with large employers can be great, it is worth your time to scrutinize their organization as part of the qualification process. Answers to the following questions will be useful.

- What does the organizational chart look like?
- Does the employer have an affirmative action personnel function?
- Where is it located on the organizational chart?
- Are personnel and training under the same box, and are they centralized?
- Is the central office located in your region or in another part of the country?
- And, if you're looking at a private business, is the local company a subsidiary of a parent corporation where basic personnel policies are actually spawned?

Many of these questions can be answered by checking with your library resources and by calling or writing the organization's public relations office.

Pulling together employer size information at this early qualifying stage will also give you a head start with introduction techniques.

Forecasting Job Opportunities

REGIONAL PROXIMITY
If your agency cannot maintain regular contact with an employer because of geographical factors, it makes little difference how attractive the employer might be on other criteria. Like a good garden, a productive account needs regular, personal attention. Golden opportunities that were not identified during early negotiations may be missed if the telephone serves as the sole means of communication after the first negotiation.

AGENCY'S EXPERIENCE WITH EMPLOYERS
If your agency has a history of involvement with individual job placement efforts, you probably already have access to information on employers in your area. That information is most likely stored in your agency files and in the heads of past and present agency personnel.

However, several cautions are worth mentioning with regard to tapping agency experience with local employers:

- An employer's reputation for being unresponsive to hiring people with disabilities can result from a number of factors. Some reluctance might be eliminated with a proper application of the employer accounts strategy. For example, you might find an employer unresponsive because previous job placement counselors were lax in post-employment follow-up. Knowing the reason for the employer's reluctance arms you with the necessary negotiating tools to point out how the accounts partnership will be different.
- A local employer with an impressive record of hiring people with disabilities may not currently have quality jobs available. Similar jobs might be available through previously untapped employment sources.
- An employer that has a clear history of exploiting people with disabilities merely to gain wage subsidies and other hiring incentives should be scratched from your list of prospects. Some employers have a reputation for terminating employees shortly after the incentives have run their course.

You should certainly consider your agency's experience with local employers. But don't rely entirely on an employer's reputation when making your list of prime targets. The exception occurs when a pattern of exploitation is a clear feature of the employer's reputation.

NONDISCRIMINATION OBLIGATIONS AND POLICIES
Many large employers are obligated under state and federal laws and, more importantly, the regulations implementing those laws, to exercise nondiscrimination in their hiring of qualified job applicants with disabilities. These laws embrace a large number of private businesses and virtually all publicly-funded employers. Employers that have legal nondiscrimination and affirmative action obligations represent prime targets for the employer accounts approach. Lists of obligated employers in your region may be available through your agency or the state's employment and economic development departments. Even without an official list, you can make sound guesses about which employers in your region are or are not obligated. This is achieved through a working knowledge of the types of employers embraced by the federal regulations implementing Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

THE LONG-RANGE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ACCOUNT
There are several types of information that will be helpful for guessing about the potential impact a particular employer account could have on your long-range plans and desired outcomes.

Forecast of Job Opportunities. You can discover the probable types of jobs the employer may have available by knowing the employer's core products or services. Just as important, that information allows you a base for forecasting whether the employer's products or services are on an upswing or downswing with respect to demand. Keep in mind that high product demand in the United States does not necessarily imply high demand for U.S. workers to produce those items.

If the employer you're thinking about approaching appears to be in a market that will have a sustained demand for local employees over the next several years, an account relationship with that employer may very well result in a significant impact on employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

However, the fact that a particular employer has frozen new hiring or laid off a number of its current work force does not necessarily disqualify that employer as a preferred account. Why? Because our national and regional economies are affected by general cycles of good and bad times. Gerald Good, an employer accounts developer for the California Department of Rehabilitation, suggests that downturns in the overall economy contain opportunities for establishing excellent accounts that will prosper when the cycle reverses. Good says that providing employers secondary services such as help with "troubled" employees or controlling disability insurance costs is a way to cement a working relationship. The tricky part is deciding which employers will participate in a general economic recovery and which will not. We're all too aware that the dismal science of economic forecasting has not advanced much further than Calvin Coolidge's prediction that "Business will be better or worse."

Two publications issued by the Department of Labor are useful references. One, Occupational Outlook, is a quarterly publication that reports trends in employment. The second is, Occupational Outlook Handbook, an encyclopedia of job forecasts, descriptions of the work related to each job, and the physical, mental, and training requirements of the jobs described. Both references can be obtained through a local library or the Government Printing Office, North Capitol and H Sts. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20401.

Availability of Career Ladders. An employer whose workers have opportunities for movement up the hierarchy represents a potentially significant account. Organizations that don't offer their employees a reasonable degree of upward mobility offer less potential for quality careers and limited advancement for your clients.

If you can get a preliminary estimate of the employer's ratio of "dead-end" jobs, you'll be in a better position to decide whether or not more extensive homework on the employer is warranted in advance of your first contact.

Employment Training Programs. Since your "wish list" of desired accomplishments possibly included employer-assisted job training for your clients, consider researching the training programs the potential employer offers its employees. Targeted-readership magazines are often valuable tools for this phase of your research. Pretend for a moment that you found an article in a back issue of Training magazine titled "HRD at Canossa Corp.—Leapfrogging Language Barriers on the Workfloor." The article reported Canossa's pride in being able to incorporate a number of Vietnamese refugees into its work force. Canossa adapted its job training so it de-emphasized spoken and written English as a medium for instruction.

If you were fortunate enough to find such an article, you would know at least two important pieces of information. First, you'd know that Canossa in fact has a training program that prides itself on its adaptability. Second, you'd know that Canossa might be able to successfully employ clients who have difficulty learning through verbal instruction, such as people labelled mentally retarded or those classified as illiterate. If the proven adaptability of the company's training program could be extended to your agency's clients, that would be an accomplishment for all parties involved!

Source of Technical and Promotional Assistance. If you are thinking creatively, one lead may give you several bits of useful information. Suppose the article in Training magazine also described Canossa's small, but sophisticated, corporate media unit. According to the article, the media unit is responsible for designing Canossa's annual report and its corporate newsletters as well as supporting the employee training program. In addition, the media unit works closely with Canossa's advertising agency. An account with a company like Canossa could prove to be a valuable partner if, after establishing a good service track record, you could negotiate for technical assistance with your agency's publications.

UNION INVOLVEMENT

Some rehabilitation professionals assume unions represent immovable barriers to employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Whether that assumption rests on generalization from personal experience or class bias is immaterial. It is simply not accurate.

If you find that a good prospect's employees are represented by a union, it would be useful to keep the following points in mind before drawing any negative conclusions about the union's effect on your effort.

- The many unions in this country are as diverse in their personalities and motivations as are people.
- Some unions have a strong tradition of civil rights commitment and activism, including the rights of people with disabilities.
- Some unions have fought to implement programs for their members who were disabled by working conditions. The United Mine Workers' fight for members who contracted black lung disease is only one instance.
- Most importantly, the times are changing. In a recent issue of Disabled USA, Ruth Ellen Ross reported a number of major initiatives taken by unions to open employment for people with disabilities. She quotes Charles Pillard, president of the international Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and vice chair of the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped:

  > Unions not only seek to maintain suitable jobs for workers who may become disabled, they are also deeply involved in programs to provide employment for handicapped persons entering the work force.

Organized labor's attention to the employment needs of people with disabilities, and especially its interest in those people who are presently not union members, is stimulated by enlightened awareness of the issues and by regulatory provisions which remove collective bargaining agreements as barriers to employment of qualified applicants with disabilities. See the various regulations implementing Sections 503 and 504.

The presence of a unionized work force may make your negotiations more complicated simply because it's there. A union may, in fact, turn out to be a strong ally if you present your case properly.

The AFL-CIO Executive Council has taken a strong advocacy position on the employment rights of people with disabilities. One place to look for advice and information is the nearest field office of the AFL-CIO's Human Resources Development Institute. Field offices are located in 59 cities.

Knowing which unions are involved with a potentially significant employer and knowing the unions' policies and resources for workers with disabilities is important information to have in hand during the initial discussions with the employer's representative.

HOW MUCH RESEARCH IS ENOUGH?

The depth of your research effort should be determined by a conscious cost-benefit estimate. Specifically, the more significant an impact a particular employer account would have on your goals, the more you can justify the cost of thorough homework, especially if the account is difficult to persuade.

If you've concluded that an account with a particular employer would constitute an enormous breakthrough in the available employment opportunities for your clients, there are at least three good reasons for engaging in more homework on the employer:

- to obtain further information on which to base a more precise forecast of the quantity and quality of the available jobs;
- to better anticipate which of your supportive services might be most attractive to the employer; and,
- to arm yourself with inside information that can be used to establish your credibility with key personnel.

Without a doubt, research on employers can be overdone. We're not suggesting that you delve deeply into every facet of every employer in your region. We can report, however, that top account developers agree that studying a potential employer is essential for effectiveness and efficiency.

In summary, the purpose of testing the qualifications of potential employer accounts against the criteria discussed above is to develop a preliminary estimate of the possible impact that relationship could have on your multiple goals. Strength on any one of the measures could be reason enough to place a high value on a particular account. If all the criteria were met in strength, you would be looking at a possible windfall for the people your agency represents.

RESOURCES FOR USEFUL INFORMATION

The list below contains valuable source material to help you search for potential employers.

California Governor's Committee
for Employment of the Handicapped
800 Capitol Mall
Sacramento, CA 95814

California's Manufacturers Register

Department of Rehabilitation
830 K Street Mall
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dun & Bradstreet, Million Dollar Directory

Employment Development Department
800 Capitol Mall
Sacramento, CA 95814

Moskowitz, M., Katz, M., & Levering, R.,
Everybody's Business: An Almanac,
New York, Harper & Row, 1980.

Forbes

Fortune

Government Printing Office
North Capitol and H Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20401

Moody's Industrial Manual

Standard and Poor's Corporate Records

Standard and Poor's Corporate Directories

Standard and Poor's Register of Corporations

Walker's Manual of Western Corporations

3 Preparing Your Case

Now it's time to talk about organizing all the information you've pulled together as you prepare to launch your account strategy toward the qualified employers you've selected.

The principal topics we discuss in this chapter are:

- Understanding Negotiations
- How to Sort Your Selling Points
- Research and the First Contact Script

My, he was disappointed.
He had forgotten that a bargain dog never bites.

Ogden Nash (1902–1971)

UNDERSTANDING NEGOTIATIONS

A negotiation is an exchange between people which is executed to fulfill their needs. By definition, then, establishing a productive employer account fully qualifies as a negotiation process. As part of the bargain, the accounts strategy places extreme demands on a job agent's sophistication and skill in effective negotiation. Unfortunately, negotiation skills are not encouraged or taught in American culture. On the contrary, most of us were brought up to believe that the behaviors involved in negotiating are impolite, and that "no" really does mean No!

However, our culture is looking less and less askance at the act of negotiation. It is increasingly easy, for example, to find "how-to" books on negotiating skills. The rising popularity of such instruction is a distinct advantage to job agents who are learning to pursue a strategy which relies so heavily on negotiation skills.

Establishing and maintaining a productive employer account is not the result of a single negotiation. Rather, the process is more a series of negotiations which only begins with the employer's discovery of a need for some of the services available on your accounts menu. The first handshake following that discovery will undoubtedly be followed by the need for further handshakes—especially if the employer will be expected to accommodate extraordinary needs of clients who are not known to you at the time the relationship is established.

Whether you are directly accountable for both the establishment and the management of an account, or only a portion of the process, your effectiveness and self-confidence will be enhanced by mastery of the art of negotiation. Becoming proficient at that art results from self-directed study, the assistance of masters, and practice.

TYPES OF NEGOTIATIONS

Michael Schatzki, a professional negotiator and author, defines success as arriving at an outcome that's within your range of satisfaction. He insists success depends upon your ability to anticipate which kind of negotiation you're entering. Why? Because each type of negotiation creates its own climate, and calls for different styles and scripts on the part of the players involved.

The key to anticipating the climate for a particular negotiation is to temporarily put aside your own needs and point of view. Put yourself in the shoes of the person you have to persuade. It is critical, Schatzki says, that you ask yourself a fundamental question before initiating an important negotiation process: "How is the other party likely to respond to my wanting to negotiate with him or her?"

To help us organize our thinking about the other party's possible responses to our negotiation initiative, Schatzki characterizes negotiations according to three general types:

Oh-Boy Negotiations

Show-Me Negotiations

Oh-No Negotiations

We've all had experience with each of these types of negotiation, whether it's been through shopping for a car, advertising a service, or asking for a raise.

Although any of the three types might characterize a particular negotiation at any point in the overall employer accounts process, let's look specifically at the establishment phase for now.

Oh-Boy

Show-Me

Oh-No

OH-BOY NEGOTIATIONS

Oh-Boy Negotiations are those in which both sides have the expectation of winning at the time the negotiation begins. The buying and selling of automobiles and homes represent classic instances of Oh-Boy Negotiations. You know, for example, that the car salesperson has a need. As soon as you walk up and say, "How much are you asking for that Buick over there? Mine's the one you can see on fire up the street," the salesperson is pretty sure you have a need, too. Whether the two of you can fulfill each other's needs depends on the potential for overlap between your range of price satisfaction and the seller's. Discovering that overlap becomes a joint venture.

The early stages of employer accounts often fall under the Oh-Boy category. If the city parks manager has been hassled by the city's affirmative action officer for not having anyone with disabilities on the park maintenance crews, you might be just the miracle she was praying for. Or, if the chairperson of the Canossa Corporation Board of Directors has expressed his strong desire that the company hire people with disabilities, especially since he was just appointed to a certain federal committee, your contact with Canossa's personnel office might be warmly received.

Your homework on potential employers may give you reasonable grounds to believe you're entering an Oh-Boy Negotiation. On the other hand, you may not discover your good fortune until sometime during your early contacts.

SHOW-ME NEGOTIATIONS

When one party has a need, but the other party is indifferent, you have the basis for a Show-Me Negotiation. The party with the need tries to create a corresponding need for the other person. The primary function of advertising is to create "needs" in us we didn't know we had. Advertising is effective when it can convert a potential Show-Me Negotiation into an Oh-Boy type.

Lacking information to the contrary, it is reasonable to operate on the assumption that establishing any new employer account will begin as a Show-Me Negotiation. After all, if people with disabilities were sought-after employees, you might be working at a different job.

Don't fall into the trap of assuming that indifference to the needs of the people you represent means that you must expect apathy or thinly veiled rejection. The people who make employment decisions for large organizations have a lot of other problems on their minds, and you may be the third person that day representing a group of people who have a legitimate claim on affirmative action.

A large part of your job will be to discover needs the employer has that the employer didn't know you could fill. When you've done that, you will have converted a Show-Me into an Oh-Boy Negotiation.

OH-NO NEGOTIATIONS

If you've ever tried to get a plumbing contractor to tear out and fix the shoddy work he did on your house, you're probably familiar with an Oh-No Negotiation. In these situations, as Schatzki says,

> Your opponent's attitude is that he has nothing to gain—and a lot to lose—by negotiating with you. Consequently, he'll try to avoid you at all costs . . . You have to force the issue in an Oh-No Negotiation because if your opponent has his way, there will be no negotiation at all.

The general tactic for resolving Oh-No Negotiations is what Schatzki calls creating a "backhanded need," a need for something not to happen, basically a threat. But for this tactic to work, your opponent must be made to feel that need, and must believe that you are both willing and capable of carrying out the threat.

Because of the screening process you've used to qualify potential employers, you would rarely expect to deal directly with an extreme Oh-No Negotiation. One thing your agency needs to have thought through, however, is a general procedure to follow if you happen to stumble into such a negotiation.

If there were dreams to sell,
Merry and sad to tell,
And the crier rung the bell,
What would you buy?

Thomas Lovell Beddoes (1803–1849)

If, for example, you were to enter discussions with an employer who had clear nondiscrimination obligations, yet blatantly disregarded those obligations, what would you be expected to do? Should you ignore the situation, or should you precipitate action to rectify the violation? If you choose the latter, you must have the will and the power behind you to see the matter through to its conclusion. Otherwise, both you and your cause lose credibility.

ANTICIPATION REDUCES SURPRISES

These three characterizations of negotiations are offered as reference points on a continuum rather than as mutually exclusive types. It is unlikely you will ever encounter a "pure type" of negotiation in the process of trying to establish employer accounts. In general, unless you have strong evidence to suggest that you are facing either an Oh-Boy or an Oh-No situation, prepare yourself as if your first interactions with a potential employer qualify as Show-Me Negotiations.

Consider operating on the basis of the following assumptions. You are dealing with people whose careers rise and fall on the basis of their own negotiating skills. Since you're not talking with them about charity, they'll want to get from you as much as they give in return, or more. You will be doing the same thing. As good negotiators, they will not reveal all their needs voluntarily. Some employer representatives will say "show me" when they're thinking "oh boy," and vice versa. Others will say "no" when they really mean "show me."

Thinking in advance about the kind of negotiation you're likely to engage in will help you avoid uncomfortable situations where you are surprised by what occurs. Figuring out what an employer really needs and means is an acquired skill. Your skill development will be enhanced by the depth of your research, the way you anticipate the type of negotiation that faces you, and the manner in which you organize your selling points before going in.

HOW TO SORT YOUR SELLING POINTS

The best negotiators prepare a clear, flexible sales platform in advance. In this section, we suggest a scheme for adapting your selling points to promote your goals with employers you've identified.

AN ANALOGY FROM SALES

Let's imagine that your task is to design the advertising campaign for an automobile that was just introduced to the American consumer a year and a half ago—the Munster Turtle. On the legal pad before you are your first notes on the potential selling points you have to work with:

- The Turtle seats five adults comfortably (honest!).
- It's quiet.
- It has an EPA gas mileage rating of 44/32.
- Munster is a U.S. company but the Turtle parts are made and assembled in Japan.
- The Turtle has a two-year warranty.
- Munster dealers have a good reputation for after-sale service.
- The base list price is $11,995.
- Munster management has approved a $500 rebate to be announced at your discretion.
- Munster has made arrangements to provide its own low-cost financing.
- In federal safety tests, 99% of the Turtles tested did not burst into flame after rear-end impact.
- Based on your analysis of recent sales data, Munster will give salespeople the option (at Munster's expense) to throw in "for free" a stereo cassette AM/FM unit, an extended limited warranty for two years, and trade-ins up to 125% of resale value.

You decide that before you look at the latest market data, you'll try to sort the items on your list into three categories:

1. **Inherent Selling Points:** positive characteristics inherent in the product.
2. **Sweeteners:** offers or services which might enhance the attractiveness of the product.
3. **Hole-Cards:** additional selling points that could be used but are costly, last resort sweeteners. They may cause negative perception of the inherent quality of the product.

Your preliminary breakdown for the Turtle might look like this:

Inherent selling points

- ► comfortable seating
- ► quiet
- ► EPA rating

Sweeteners

- ► two-year warranty
- ► good service reputation
- ► low-cost financing

Hole-cards

- ► rebate: costly, and risks the question, "If it's such a great car, why are you 'bribing' us to buy it?"
- ► salesperson options: same considerations as above

What did we leave off the list?

Price: Not a selling point; will have to be dealt with by having Walter Cronkite rave about the Turtle's elegance and quality.

U.S. Company/Japanese Made: Have to wait for in-depth interview results to figure that out.

Crash data: Forget it; no one wants to hear about crashes, and somebody's bound to ask about the 1% of the Turtles that did burst into flame.

Now, let's look at the sales data to see if we're dealing with an Oh-Boy, a Show-Me, or an Oh-No market.

If the Turtle is in an Oh-Boy market, people are lined up around the block eager to put their orders in for a Turtle. Postpone any further discussion of Hole-Cards whatsoever!

If you find the Turtle sales are in a sluggish, Show-Me market, shift the extended warranty into the Sweetener category "for this month only." If the level of indifference is serious, throw in the rebate, and maybe the stereo and trade-in deal as well.

But if the Turtle has gotten caught up in an Oh-No market, where customers drive out of their way to avoid even seeing them in the dealers' windows, pull out all the stops! Figure out some way to hype the crash data. Shout about patriotic duty to buy American. Mumble about the made-in-Japan part. If all that doesn't work, threaten to go to Congress for a loan.

BUT A CLIENT ISN'T A TURTLE

How does this sales analogy relate to the employer accounts strategy? After all, we were talking about people, not Turtles. In fact, your role in the matter of promoting employer accounts is more like an agent than a person selling things.

Though their strategies are different, there are times when both agents and salespeople have to think about their tasks in similar ways. One common task is persuading another party that he or she is being offered a good deal.

The major difference in the two strategies is that the Turtle salesperson only has to be concerned with meeting the needs of two parties, the buyer and the seller. The Turtle doesn't have "needs" in this exchange. As an agent, though, you have to satisfy the needs of at least three parties: the employer's, your own, and the people you represent.

EMPLOYER ACCOUNTS:
A GENERAL LIST OF SELLING POINTS

Thinking about what you have to offer in terms of inherent selling points, sweeteners, and hole-cards is simply part of the complex art of negotiation. In your case, the practical matter is that there are many people with disabilities who need your agency's assistance; and you have limited time, energy, talent, and agency budget with which to meet your client's needs. Part of striking a good deal with an employer means that you achieve the outcome you desire without giving everything away in the process.

As we suggested in Chapter 2, it is very important that you make a general list of the selling points your agency can capably deliver in a timely manner before making the first contact with an important target employer. Include on the list all the items you can think of, whether or not you believe certain items would be relevant or persuasive with respect to that particular employer.

For this general list, separate the items into A) Inherent Selling Points, and B) Potential Sweeteners and Hole-Cards. Depending on the range of factors at your disposal, your list might look something like the following:

A) Inherent Selling Points

1. Applicants are job-ready and eager to work or have sufficient engineering and instructional support to allow them to become qualified on the job.
2. Applicants have learned to cope and try harder as part of their everyday experience.
3. By accommodating the special needs of a person with disabilities, the employer can demonstrate concern for the special needs of all employees.
4. Other employees who have family members with disabilities benefit by seeing firsthand that a productive occupational future is possible for their family members.
5. As a group, employees with disabilities rank average or better on job stability, safety, attendance, and job performance.*
6. People who have disabilities at the time of their employment demonstrate a higher degree of motivation toward good safety, attendance, and job performance.*
7. There are no reported increases in employers' compensation costs.*
8. An employee with a disability can be added evidence of compliance with affirmative action obligations (where pertinent).

*Joe Wolfe, "Disability Is No Handicap for Du Pont." (Article reprinted by California Governor's Committee for Employment of the Handicapped, May, 1974).

B) Potential Sweeteners & Hole-Cards

1. Your agency can refer job applicants who have been screened and evaluated in advance for motivation and qualifications.
2. Your agency can provide pre-placement training at no cost to the employer.
3. Your agency provides post-placement and problem-solving assistance.
4. Your agency can provide advice on cost-effective barrier removal, job modifications, and other forms of "reasonable accommodation."
5. Your agency can help the employer acquire tax credits, wage subsidies, and capital equipment deductions.
6. Your agency can provide disability "awareness" training for employees.
7. Your agency can provide or facilitate assistance for current employees who are "troubled."
8. Your agency can pay for necessary post-placement on-the-job training.
9. Your agency can provide consultation on implementing affirmative action/nondiscrimination policies and practices.
10. Your agency can assist with reducing employer's Workers Compensation costs.
11. Your agency can assist with carrying out and softening effects of legitimate termination of employment.
12. Your agency can bear (some) costs of accommodation related to facility, devices, technical assistance, etc.
13. Your agency can work on employer cost reduction through tie-ins with federal and state CETA-type programs.

The actual list you might construct will depend entirely on the way you look at things and the resources your agency can deliver. The important thing is to make a list.

Having made a "first-cut" list of selling points, go back through it and take a hard look at each item in the (B) category. With cool objectivity, think about each item in light of the following questions:

- Which items constitute services you would routinely expect to provide an employer in the course of maintaining an account relationship?
- Which items would be considered extraordinary in routine account services and add costs to your agency in terms of time, effort, or dollars?
- Which items, if stressed, might constitute even slight risks to the credibility of the items on your list of inherent selling points?

By filtering all your selling points through these three questions, you'll get a sense of the potential selling points that could be held back, or de-emphasized, during initial marketing efforts.

You'll also discover some interesting little problems. Some of your Sweeteners and Hole-Cards risk the credibility of your clients' inherent quality, particularly if you're not prepared to respond to possible contradictions.

Take the Sweetener of tax incentives as a case in point. If you dwell too much on this potent marketing point, you risk having the employer focus on an apparent contradiction: "If your clients would make such wonderful employees, why is the government prepared to 'bribe' me to hire them?" How would you respond if an employer asked you that question? The real risk here is an employer may disregard your clients' inherent value altogether and lock in on the incentives. If that happens, the tenure of your clients' employment may extend only as long as the incentives are in effect.

Knowledge is power, if you know it about the right person.

Ethel Watts Mumford

The point of this discussion is not to suggest the elimination of certain selling points, and certainly not tax incentives. Rather, it's to reinforce the importance of considering the implications of each of your possible selling points, how your selling points can be used, and how each of them might best be woven into your general marketing approach.

RESEARCH AND THE FIRST CONTACT SCRIPT

It's very probable that you will not find any two account developers who agree completely about the most effective approach for the first presentation of their case for hiring people with disabilities.

One will report, "I just go in and start running down my list of selling points until I notice some reaction of interest in the face of the other person — then I know what to hit on harder."

"I always play up the tax incentives right off," another will say. "That seems to work for me most of the time."

Yet a third, equally effective developer, will say, "I don't want to give away anything I don't have to. Depending on what I know ahead of time, I stress some points more than others and hold some things back unless it looks like I really need them."

All three individuals may be equally effective. How should someone new to this task go about thinking through what he or she will say during that first encounter with a potential employer?

Let's go back to an earlier question. How important is the potential employer's account to the successful achievement of your goals? If the importance of a particular employer is moderate, low, or if you've neglected to find out, then the cold call, go-down-the-list-and-hope approach may be practical. At least you've reduced the cost of pre-contact homework and planning. But you'll also increase certain other costs. Salespeople who rely on cold calls have to accept a high percentage of rejections.

If you're always approaching a common group of employers, then it might be reasonable to expect that one of your selling points will be sufficiently attractive to create interest in your account proposal on a consistent basis. However, the assumption that certain selling points will create the same interest with different employers is risky. The environment that influences employer needs and motivations is dynamic.

AN ORGANIZING TOOL FOR TAILOR-MADE PRESENTATIONS

If a shotgun approach won't always work, when is it advisable to prepare a more customized organization of selling points before the first contact with an employer? We recommend the tailor-made approach when:

- you're first learning the ropes about how to establish employer accounts; and,
- when the particular employer's account would make a significant impact on the "good jobs" mission.

Creation of a tailor-made presentation for a potential employer brings together the major topics for consideration we've discussed. These include your research on employers, your projection of what you want to accomplish, your estimate of the kind of negotiation you're about to enter, and your general breakdown of all the selling points you have the capacity to deliver.

Keep in mind that, at this point in the discussion, your only concern is with organizing your available information and ideas. Later on we'll cover the kinds of things you might talk about during the initial attempt to persuade an employer that entering an account relationship with your agency is a good idea.

The format on the following page is offered as a tool for organizing your research and thoughts about planning a sales approach for an important employer. Most of the format is self-explanatory. The structure for arranging your "selling points," however, requires some elaboration.

First, the format assumes that you will not knowingly enter into Oh-No Negotiations. Your preliminary research will most likely lead you to anticipate two results. Either something among the services you offer is already appealing to the particular employer ("Oh-Boy") or the employer will have to be persuaded that what you offer is what the employer needs ("Show-Me").

Your initial task when you get to this section of the format is to decide which of the two types of negotiation you anticipate with the named employer.

Next comes the task of categorizing your selling points according to the type of negotiation you anticipate and according to what you know about the employer's needs and motivations. You'll find it useful to review three key questions when you approach this step in your task.

Pre-contact Summary

POTENTIAL EMPLOYER

PERTINENT EMPLOYER INFORMATION

DESIRABLE OUTCOMES

TYPE OF NEGOTIATION EXPECTED

SELLING POINTS

	OH-BOY	SHOW-ME
INHERENT		
SWEETENERS		
HOLE-CARDS		

Sweetening the Deal

1. What are the selling points about your clients?

You might underline those points your research suggests would be of particular interest to the employer. Job stability would be a topic of interest if you know in advance that turnover is a chronic headache for the employer. If the underlined selling points fall under the "Show-Me" column, you would need to brush up on your facts and figures in case the employer asks, "How do you know . . .?"

2. What are the Sweeteners you have available for the employer?

Under the "Oh-Boy" column, you will be listing services provided or arranged by your agency that would be on the routine menu in an accounts relationship. If you think one or more of those services is what, in fact, creates the grounds for an Oh-Boy Negotiation, underline those points. They are the issues you'll want to dwell on in your initial discussions.

If you're anticipating a skeptical, "Show-Me" employer, you'll have to think about the Sweetener category somewhat differently. There may be certain selling points among your routine account services that, if fully presented, would be intriguing to the employer and could possibly convert your negotiation to an Oh-Boy type. Those are the points about which you're likely to be most closely examined, and about which you'll want the most information at your fingertips.

In addition, if you're facing a Show-Me discussion, you will want to consider moving certain selling points you might otherwise keep as Hole-Cards under an Oh-Boy situation into the Sweetener category.

As you did with the Inherent selling points, underline those issues that you think would be most persuasive to the particular employer based on your preliminary research.

3. Which of the selling points will you set aside as Hole-Cards?

Remember the criteria for designating selling points as Hole-Cards. They're out of the ordinary in an accounts relationship, they're costly, they jeopardize the credibility of your Inherent selling points, or they can have all of those features simultaneously.

Hole-Cards are points you'd rather not expose during early negotiations if you can establish the accounts relationship without them. But knowing what they are, and knowing they are held in reserve, you can have the flexibility to move your Hole-Cards into the Sweetener category at any time in the negotiation process.

FOR YOUR EYES ONLY

The utility of the summary format described above might be strangled if it were adopted in a formal way. The format was constructed simply as a way to help you consolidate your notes.

The summary device, and the recommended tactics that feed into it, serve to reduce the odds of miscalculations. Even the best of the accounts developers sometimes misread the nature of approaching negotiations. The best developers have one thing in common, though: adaptability. They're fast on their mental feet, and they're able to reshuffle their scripts without skipping a beat. The potential value of the summary tool will be to prepare you for the ebb and flow of continuing negotiations and avoid becoming dependent on a rigid script that you or anyone else might construct.

4
Insuring Good First Impressions

A healthy grasp of first impression dynamics is crucial to the successful development of employer accounts. In this chapter, we discuss the importance of establishing good first impressions related to:

- your savvy in the employer's own environment;
- your agency; and,
- the clients you represent.

Remember, no one can make you feel inferior without your consent.

Eleanor Roosevelt (1884–1962)

ESTABLISHING YOUR PERSONAL CREDIBILITY

The old truism, first impressions are lasting impressions, is especially applicable in the context of developing productive employer accounts. The first impressions you establish for yourself, your agency, and your clients are interrelated. If you inadvertently tarnish the credibility of one, the credibility and thrust of your overall strategy will be wounded, perhaps fatally. Once again, we have to acknowledge a diversity of approaches among effective employment developers. They don't always agree on the tactics and styles they choose for establishing good impressions with potential employers. In spite of that, we'll find some common themes and recommendations that could be useful to a new practitioner of the employer accounts strategy.

In the world of human services, your personal credibility is already established. You've completed a rigorous course of professional training. Your peers and supervisors acknowledge the competence and concern with which you perform your duties. And, as a practitioner of the "rehabilitation process," you have mastered your profession's particular behavioral styles and technical vocabulary.

But the world in which your credibility is quickly recognized and appreciated has boundaries. There are other worlds where your professional skills are not as easily recognized or highly valued. Unless you've had business experience independent of your career in rehabilitation services, you're likely to find the following discussion somewhat foreign and the suggestions demanding. Adapting to a new environment is no small problem.

Consider a solution worked out by a person who found that, to be effective, she would have to adopt certain styles of speech that were not always her personal preferences. She pretended to herself she was trying out for a play. Each morning before a meeting with a contact, she faced her closet and asked herself, "Now, what costume do I need today?" She extended her play-acting to other facets of business interaction. She tailored her "script" for certain audiences. She made maximum use of the "props" she carried with her. She carefully scrutinized her reading material and made "location" visits for background information. Her preparation exercises soon became habits. And they worked for her.

If one of your unfamiliar worlds happens to be the upper reaches of large organizations, it is useful to approach those worlds as if they constituted a different subculture. Part of your learning task is to act as if you are an ecologist studying the interaction between human behavior and the environment of organizational hierarchies.

There are three reasonable and accessible routes you can simultaneously follow as you study upper hierarchies. They are reading, training, and observation.

READING

The first recommendation is simply to read what executives read and what's written about them. Fortunately, those two types of literature have considerable overlap.

The suggestion that you read what executives read refers to popular print media, not necessarily the textbooks they might have read in business school. Periodicals, such as Forbes, Business Week, Fortune, and The Wall Street Journal, are helpful for your studies. Among the articles in these periodicals you'll find reports on management styles and their effects on spotlighted corporations, political analyses, and lengthy feature pieces on particularly powerful executives. These periodicals, among others, both reflect and shape opinion in the business and government communities. Because of the targeted readership, they naturally communicate in the language of their audience.

An excellent place to find popular media for and about executives is the "self-help" section in your bookstore. There you'll find two essential books for your studies, both by John Molloy— Dress for Success (for men) and The Women's Dress for Success Book. Molloy's books are based on empirical research on executive style and reactions to the costumes of business. Some costumes stimulate perceptions of credibility.

"Homo Executivus" in Native Environment

If you want to establish personal credibility quickly in the environment of upper hierarchies, the single most important factor to consider is your dress. As Molloy's research demonstrates, "People who look successful and well educated receive preferential treatment in almost all of their social or business encounters." The preferential treatment you want is the kind that will more readily open the doors of employment for people with disabilities. That's why Molloy's books are such useful learning or review tools.

Consequently, if it's vitally important for you to express your nonconformity or to make a statement through the clothes you wear, you'd be well advised to concentrate on a facet of the rehabilitation process other than the employer accounts strategy.

The single most useful book for understanding executive behavior continues to be Michael Korda's Power. Korda traveled through numerous executive suites and wrote a highly readable book on the subtle ways in which people in those environments acquire and keep power.

By studying books in the genre of Korda's Power, Betty Lehan Harragan's Games Mother Never Taught You: Corporate Gamesmanship for Women, and Robert Ringer's Winning Through Intimidation, you'll be able to recognize the tricks of the power game. Best of all, through that recognition you'll be less likely to have your own power diluted by that sense of intimidation many of us in human services experience when first in executive environments.

Last but not least, a modest amount of reading in pertinent areas of business technology will often help you speak the language of a prospective employer. It's not difficult to acquire enough vocabulary to help you make a good first impression. Anyone who has mastered the art of taking essay tests in school knows that you don't have to know everything about a topic to score points. You do, however, need to know how to sprinkle enough vocabulary and information along the way to make it appear that you know more than the limitations of the test situation allow you to reveal.

In a similar way, it is possible to establish your initial credibility through the kinds of questions you ask, avoiding declarative statements that might result in embarrassing questions in return. You may only know enough to ask, "I understand your company manufactures freeblems for ductless wampels. I never did understand just how the freeblem works; could you explain it to me?"

How did you know about freeblems? Perhaps by checking into the employer organization's line of work, and by remembering that whenever five Americans share a common interest, one of them will publish a magazine focused on that peculiar common interest. With that piece of cultural insight, you might have gone to the library to peruse articles and advertisements in back issues of The Ductless Wampel Monthly. You might even find out what a ductless wampel is!

Further reading into corporate literature might produce even better gems of information, allowing you to say in passing, "I understand that your parent corporation, XYZ Corp., has a strong policy on hiring people with disabilities. We're in a position to help you fully implement that policy here in the Freeblem Division . . ."

How did you find out about the XYZ Corp. policy? You noticed on one of Freeblem Inc.'s annual reports or brochures the notation "another member of the XYZ Corp." Then you looked up the headquarters address, and you wrote to its director of public relations with your question about the policy. All it cost was time. You decided whether or not the effort might be worth it.

TRAINING

There are many sources of training that can be valuable for learning how to make good impressions and to navigate smoothly in executive suite environments. The following are just a few of the possibilities.

- Community colleges and universities offer relevant courses on marketing, management, and advertising.
- Your own agency, if it's large, probably has its own training section. However, agency-provided management training often focuses on meeting the peculiar bureaucratic needs of the agency itself and may not be as helpful for learning about the needs and management styles of other business or government organizations.
- Short-term seminars or workshops are delivered by private entrepreneurs.

An important question you can ask yourself as you consider investing your time and your agency's money in training is, "What source of training will help me learn what I need and simultaneously allow me to meet potentially useful people who inhabit the environments I want to enter?" Professional training settings are often good places to make new acquaintances, establish useful contacts, and collect inside information not included in the course curriculum. In other words, if you want to find out how to impress high-level managers, go to the places they go to learn how to impress and manage each other.

Your role as an accounts developer and manager may well require you to do some public speaking. You're not alone. As executives move up the hierarchy, they, too, have to be more concerned about their public speaking skills.

If you are a bit uncertain about your own public speaking skills, consider enrolling in a class or the Toastmasters Club. Not only will you have a safe place to polish your speaking skills, but you'll be able to do so in one of those settings where you have chances to meet potentially useful individuals. In fact, by having to listen to your fellow students stumble through their practice speeches, you might pick up a lot of information that could be helpful later for establishing your own credibility.

OBSERVATION

When you're waiting in the airport with time to kill, play a private game with yourself. Try to identify the top executives among the men and women who pass by you. You won't know how you scored, of course, unless you ask them. But the more important part of the game is to think about all the characteristics that made you guess that a particular person was a top executive, a person with power. Was it the clothes, the size and style of an attache case, cut of the hair, carriage, the way the person talked with a companion? Your observations might stimulate some ideas about the costume and props you could use to establish your own credibility when you are a performer in upper hierarchies.

You have access to a number of other executive gathering places outside of the executive suite. Trade shows and business conventions are excellent settings in which to observe the type of people you'll need to persuade. At the same time, you can obtain a large amount of technical information. When you're in these natural settings, be a people-watcher as part of your studies. As Yogi Berra reminded us, "You can observe a lot just by watching."

Your observational studies will lead you to an interesting discovery about business managers: they talk differently! Your discovery won't be unique, however. While in the process of delivering an intensive job development/job training service, one group of human service people found that they had to produce a translation of terms that were familiar to them, but were foreign to the business environments in which they found themselves working.

The purest treasure mortal times afford
Is spotless reputation . . .

William Shakespeare (1564–1616), Richard II

TRANSLATION OF COMMON TERMS*

Human Services	Business
Competitive employment	Work, the job
Rehabilitation	Job training, work
Counsel	Interview, meet with, talk with, negotiate
Client	Trainee, prospective employee
Staff, case worker, trainer	Supervisor, boss, foreman, instructor, management
Individual [_____] Plan	Employee training program, job analysis
Remuneration	Pay, $, salary, wage
Service	Business, product line
Agreement	Contract
Placement	Employment
Probation: employee will be given a chance, and another, and another	Probation: employee is given the opportunity to meet set criteria over a set period
Evaluation/assessment	Employee appraisal
Facility	Plant
Administration	Management

*Adapted from M. Callahan et al., The Process of Employing. Urbana, IL: Marc Gold & Associates, 1981.

ESTABLISHING THE CREDIBILITY OF YOUR AGENCY

Your agency's identity is like a product brand name. People will trust or be skeptical about the quality of the product behind the label based on information from direct experience or secondhand reports. The issue of agency credibility and reputation assumes importance under the employer accounts strategy.

However, this is one area of credibility-building over which you may have little control. If the director of your agency has been on the nightly news all week answering charges of fiscal mismanagement and cruelty to clients, there's not much you can do about it. But, assuming that things are not that bad and that a potential employer has only vague prior knowledge of your agency, there are some things you can do to influence the employer's perception of your agency's competence.

First, as a representative of your agency, your own first impression credibility reflects on your agency. If you look and talk like a credible person, and you speak with pride and confidence about your agency's capability to deliver the services you're describing, then the credibility of your agency will be strengthened.

To be successful [in advertising] today, you must touch base with reality. And the reality that really counts is what's already in the prospect's mind.

Al Ries & Jack Trout
Advertising executives and authors

Second, the media you use to support your presentation can greatly help or directly hinder the establishment of your agency's credibility.

Marshall McLuhan exaggerated a bit, but not too much, with his famous statement that "The medium is the message." Have someone outside your profession take a hard look at your brochures and other print handouts, your slide shows, and films. What's the first impression your impartial observers give about the source of the media? Competent? Wordy? Businesslike? Stuck in own jargon? A charitable organization? Amateuristic? Deals with "sick" people?

Large corporations, in particular, invest a great deal more in the quality of their promotional media than do most human service organizations. Inhabitants of the upper echelons of those corporations are accustomed to seeing good, compelling, market-tested communication media. You're going to be hard pressed to establish your agency's credibility through a brochure that's packed with convoluted jargon and duplicated on a ditto machine in purple ink.

You will be an important judge of whether or not your agency's promotional media weaken the perception of your agency's credibility. Do not use media that serve only as barriers. Insist that those who have control over your agency's promotional media provide you with effective tools.

ESTABLISHING THE CREDIBILITY OF YOUR CLIENTS

If you watch television, you've probably seen the 30-second commercial for a certain brand of desk-top copying machine. It goes like this:

The spot opens with the viewer looking over the shoulder of a man sitting at a desk. We see the door to his office across the room.

The door swings open and a man in a three-piece suit wheels in a copier, gives the man behind the desk a quick spiel on the virtues of his copier, then leans toward the man (and closer to the viewer) and says in a confidential tone, ". . . and best of all, it's just as good as a Xerox." Cut.

Immediately the same scene is repeated with a second salesman, and concludes with the salesman leaning forward to announce, with a wink, ". . . and best of all, it's just as good as a Xerox." Cut.

Repeat the scene with a third salesman. But this time, just after he says ". . . and best of all," the man behind the desk interrupts in a world-weary tone of voice, "I know. It's just as good as a Xerox." Third salesman looks a little confused, clears his voice, glances down at the copier he wheeled in, and says, "But it is a Xerox!" Man behind desk stands and extends his hand toward third salesman; they shake hands. Fade to black.

This commercial works beautifully only because of the dominant position Xerox holds in the paper copier market and in the minds of the viewing audience. The same script would have been foolish if the redundant salesmen had been saying ". . . and best of all, it's just as good as Brand B." Xerox is able to slap down the credibility claims of upstart copier manufacturers by low-key reminders to customers that if they want a copier "just as good as a Xerox," they should shake hands on the real thing—the famous Xerox copier.

WHO'S THE COMPETITION?

Advertising executives Al Ries and Jack Trout, in their book on advertising strategies, Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind, insist that failure to heed two cautions will damage any attempt to establish a product's, an organization's, or an employee's strong position in the marketplace. These two cautions are:

- ► Never go head-to-head with Number One.
- ► Mind-changing is the road to advertising disaster.

Who is Number One in the employee marketplace? By far and away, the advantaged employee group in the United States, measured by average earned income, is the white, able-bodied, fully-employed male. Among the economically disadvantaged groups, people with disabilities rank close to the bottom of the income ladder.

Despite this vast economic gap, many of us promote the employment status of people with disabilities solely by stressing their similarity with Number One: "They're just like all your other employees, except they have handicaps." The claim is a fundamental truth in the sense of both human worth and comparable productivity. However, the just-as-good-as-a-Xerox approach toward establishing the credibility of clients with disabilities, no matter how "self-evident" the truth which underlies the message may be to us, contains a high risk for violating both of Ries and Trout's marketing cautions.

All of us have inherited through our culture a widely mixed collection of perceptions toward the worth of people with disabilities. It's difficult to predict how an unknown audience or individual will react to a particular generalized statement about any identifiable class of people. If you try to imagine the variety of possible responses employers might have to the just-as-good-as claim, it's clear that at least some of those responses would not be helpful in promoting the case for opening jobs for people with disabilities.

An alternative to the just-as-good-as-a-Xerox approach might incorporate two facts about people with disabilities that suggest they are more attractive as potential employees than Number One.

1. People with disabilities have had to "try harder" than people who are not disabled. Problem solving, coping, and persistence skills will transfer to the work place as well.
2. People with disabilities have shown themselves to be better than Number One in job performance, job stability, and attention to safety factors.

Both these points for establishing credibility acknowledge that people with disabilities have differences from Number One in the employment marketplace, but that the important differences are positive.

By remembering the headway Avis ("We try harder!") and 7-Up ("the UnCola") made in their respective markets, it's clear that the employer who believes "the handicapped are different" doesn't have to change his or her mind, just revise what "different" means.

Finally, the employer who isn't happy with his or her current work force doesn't have to look forward to more of the same. Your clients can become good workers.

The just-as-good-as approach doesn't do justice to the important comparative differences. Besides, we saw what happened to the poor salesman trying to sell low-positioned copiers with the just-as-good-as-Number-One strategy.

The chief virtue that language can have is clearness, and nothing distracts from it so much as the use of unfamiliar words.

Hippocrates (460?–370? B.C.)

SUBTLE (MIS)INTERPRETATIONS

There is an interesting contradiction between what many rehabilitation people preach and what they practice. We preach that disability is a limitation of function in certain aspects of life, and those limitations are amenable to therapeutic or prosthetic solutions. Yet when we address an audience of employers who need to focus on potential solutions to functional limitations, we often use distracting terms of reference.

The fact that you understand the restricted meaning of certain terms doesn't mean that a potential employer also understands. For many people, epilepsy and cerebral palsy suggest "sick in the head." Mental retardation and mental illness are often taken as synonymous. And quadriplegia? Sounds like a rare contagious disease.

The following terms describe functional limitations and promote thinking about potential solutions:

- Difficulty in interpreting information;
- Difficulty in learning new tasks;
- Limitation of sight;
- Limitation of hearing;
- Limitation of speech;
- Susceptibility to fainting, dizziness, seizures;
- Incoordination;
- Limitation of stamina;
- Difficulty in moving head;
- Difficulty in lifting and reaching with arms;
- Difficulty in sitting; and,
- Difficulty in using upper/lower extremities.

By pairing terms of reference such as those above with the People First rule for sentence structure, your media and conversations with employers can include such statements as "We work with people who have difficulty using their lower extremities" rather than ". . . with paraplegics."

Diagnostic or clinical terminology has its place, but not in the context of promoting the general employment credibility of people with disabilities. Any term or label that suggests sickness or disease can only weaken the attempt to have employers shift from old stereotypes to thinking about "reasonable accommodation" of people's functional limitations.

As you examine your promotional media and the scripts you use to enhance the first impression credibility of your clients, check for vocabulary that might interfere with a focus on solutions. Vocabulary that may be useful for establishing your own professional credibility may also diminish the credibility of your clients as potentially valuable members of a work force.

5
Presenting Your Case: The First Encounter

In this chapter, we cover two vital aspects of getting and keeping your foot in the door:

- Setting up the first appointment
- Making your pitch*

*Many of the suggestions and guidelines in this chapter were taken with permission from (or were stimulated by) Michael Callahan et al., The Process of Employing. Urbana, IL: Marc Gold & Associates, 1981.

You've done as much sleuthing as you can manage. You've made a list of the employers that look like good prospects. You have a clear vision of what you want to accomplish and a rationale for why hiring people with disabilities is consistent with the employers' interests. And you've pulled together the best tools you have for establishing a good first impression. Whether or not you feel as prepared as you'd like to be, the time has come for your first encounter with a stranger who may hold the key to employment opportunities for the people you represent.

Now you need to apply some tried-and-true sales techniques. Get your foot in the door, create a favorable response to the idea of doing business with you, and establish and maintain positive communications.

The following tips advise you on these objectives. Do not rely solely on the suggestions presented here. Keep reading about the craft of selling. Pick the brains of successful salespeople whenever you can. Keep a personal journal of the various techniques you try and their effectiveness.

SETTING UP THE FIRST APPOINTMENT

The purpose of this step is to create sufficient interest in your services so that a potential employer will take time to hear you. This is not the occasion to present your complete case or to try to form obligations beyond an agreement to meet with you. The sole objective here is to make an appointment.

TOOLS FOR ARRANGING THE FIRST APPOINTMENT

After you select a set of regional employers that meet your criteria for hot prospects, arrange an opportunity to present your case for hiring qualified employees with disabilities and for entering into an employer accounts relationship with your agency. Securing the first appointment relies on the effective use of letters, promotional media, and the telephone. These tools must be used in the same businesslike manner the potential employer has come to expect from all competent salespeople.

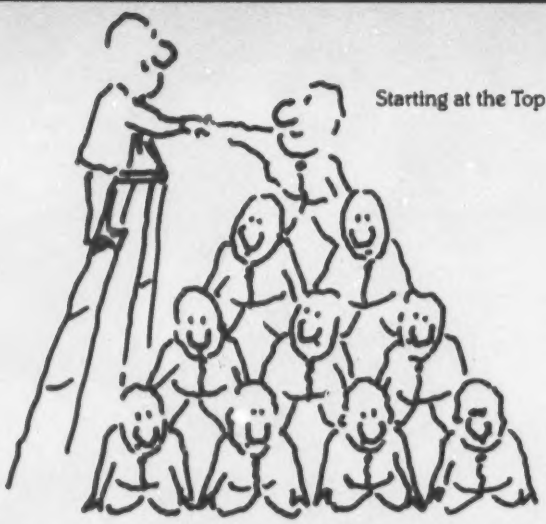
The discussion below centers on three basic tools salespeople frequently use for arranging a first appointment: letters of introduction, brochures, and the telephone. Proficiency in wielding these tools is critical to successful selling.

LETTERS OF INTRODUCTION

Although cold telephone contacts and office calls are common in some areas of sales, your best advice is to precede the first personal contact with a letter of introduction.

The purpose of a letter of introduction is to:

- introduce yourself and your organization;
- create interest in your service;
- alert the recipient to a phone call from you in the near future to set a time for an appointment; and,
- enhance your credibility by mentioning your best referrals whenever possible.



Starting at the Top

The content of the introductory letter should be as clear, concise, and businesslike as you can make it. The first sentence or two should catch the attention of a busy executive, and under no circumstances should the introductory letter be longer than one page. Avoid the use of human service or clinical terms that may be confusing or unclear to the reader or that in any way risk jeopardizing a first impression of competence.

BROCHURES

If you have confidence that your organization's brochure is effective in both style and content for a business audience, then include a copy as an enclosure along with your letter of introduction. However, if you lack confidence in your brochure's ability to reinforce a first impression of competent, beneficial services, leave it out. A weak brochure is worse than none.

INTRODUCTORY TELEPHONE CALL

The purpose of the introductory phone call is to land an appointment, not to sell your services. Your long-range goal is to establish an enduring, productive relationship. That goal can't be accomplished during a first call, so don't try. Michael Callahan and his associates suggest the following rules of thumb:

- Have a script for your call prepared in advance, and keep it in front of you at the time of the call.
- Say you're asking only for a few minutes of the person's time.
- Try not to ask questions that require negative answers.
- Be positive and calm; practice before you call.
- When the prospect indicates interest, stop talking and set up the appointment.
- Suggest two times for the appointment ("How about Tuesday at 9 in the morning, or would Friday afternoon at 2:00 be better?")
- Anticipate a range of possible objections to the usefulness of an appointment, and have your responses ready. Remember, an objection is often a message that more persuasion is required. Practice being patient, calm, and noninterruptive in response to objections.
- If possible, find out the secretary's name so that you can use his or her name the next time you telephone.
- If you close the phone call without obtaining an appointment, don't assume a permanent lack of interest. Consider a follow-up thank you letter with supporting literature as an attachment.

The potential employer will form a mental caricature of who you are, what you do, and whether or not you're an outsider to the business world, based on the way you use letters of introduction, the telephone, and brochures. For better or worse, the image you create will, to a large extent, determine the nature of future interactions with the person you hope to persuade.

PERSON TO CONTACT FIRST

Based on their experience, different job developers adopt different strategies about whom to contact first in an organization. Some developers look to an organization's personnel office for their first contacts. Some prefer the director of personnel. Others approach the affirmative action officer first if the organization has created such a function.

Other job developers routinely try to identify an individual far up in the organization's hierarchy, such as the chief executive officer, a vice president, a plant manager, or a member of an organization's board of directors as the target for their first contact. They reason that it is more effective to work down the hierarchy than up, because personnel officials and operations managers are often more responsive when they have received a message from further up the chain of command telling them to listen seriously to what you have to offer.

Another reason for selecting an upper-echelon target is that executives are empowered to make sensible revisions to accepted rules. The further down the management hierarchy one goes, the less latitude there often is to make exceptions to rules which serve to block qualified people with disabilities from job opportunities.

Either tactic presents potential risk. Some middle managers respond with resentment and passive hostility when their functions are preempted by superiors. Conversely, having to go over the head of a middle manager for assistance after that person has turned you down can seriously complicate your subsequent negotiations with that person.

The initial contact should be a tactical choice you face anew each time you make an initial foray into a potential employer's organizational environment. The success of the path you choose will depend upon the quality of your preliminary research on the organization.

If you have a choice, we suggest that the best bet is to shoot high in the hierarchy, especially when an official in a correspondingly high position in your own hierarchy can be of direct assistance.

MAKING YOUR PITCH

Your objective for the first meeting is to obtain a promise of continued negotiations and active communication with a key representative of the employer organization. It would be marvelous if the first encounter were to end with a sealed bargain that resulted in immediate job offerings for the people you represent. But the meeting will conclude successfully if you leave with your foot firmly planted in a door you've just opened. The deal you are about to promote involves too many considerations and too many players to expect the first meeting to result in a mutually beneficial contract. Then again, you might just get lucky.

Experienced job developers suggest you shoot for the following goals for the first meeting with a potential employer:

- Explanation to employer of available services and a positive response on your part to questions, objections, and stalls;
- Identification of the employer's key decision makers;
- Collection of useful information about the employer's products/services, hiring policies and procedures, operations, and labor/management environment;
- Creation of a procedure for follow-up negotiations;
- Agreement on a time for a tour of the employer's operations;
- Referrals to other potential employers; and,
- Clarification of the employer's interest in working with you and your agency.

PREPARATIONS FOR MAKING THE FIRST PITCH

It's a good habit to review your tools before each first encounter with a new employer. Those tools include the materials you plan to take, your appearance, and the script for what you want to say during the initial meeting.

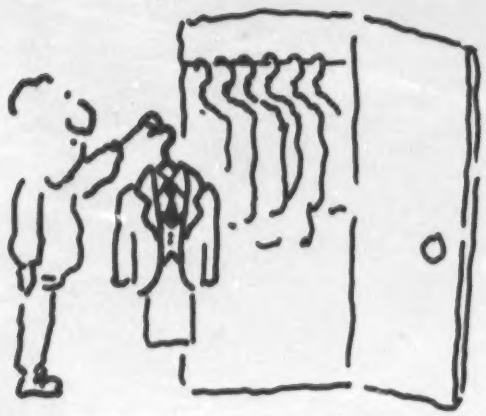
MATERIALS

Certain materials, or props, are essential for the first meeting. Others are highly desirable if you have them available.

All the props you plan to take should be screened for their degree of harmony with a business environment. Consider attache cases, for example. Scuffed leather cases convey status. Cases clearly embossed with "State of California" in fake gold lettering convey at least two distracting messages:

- the case, and possibly the person carrying it, is clearly government issue; and,
- your real purpose for being there might be to check up on or audit the business, like the guy from the state who came in last week carrying an identical case.

Neither message reinforces the image you want to create.



Your carrying case doesn't have to be leather, but it should convey at least a neutral signal. Incidentally, Michael Korda, in his study of power, discovered that perceptions of power are inversely correlated with the thickness of the attache case one carries. The person with the greatest power, the ultimate power to say yes or no, carries no case at all. He or she doesn't have to carry anything. Someone else carries it for them.

It's helpful to think about how your audience will respond to the other props you bring with you. Important props to be assessed for their impact include:

- business cards;
- brochures and other promotional literature;
- letters of referral or support; and,
- portfolio of photographs of people with disabilities doing competent work in settings familiar to the employer with whom you are meeting.

Some experienced job developers advise against using elaborate audio-visual equipment for showing promotional films, overhead transparencies, or slides during the first, usually brief, meeting with an employer. They point out that the equipment is bulky, susceptible to malfunction, time-consuming to set up, and intrusive. Such media are more useful for follow-up presentations of longer duration and for larger groups.

In general, the materials you select for the first meeting should be consistent with the tone you tried to establish with your introductory letter and phone call.

COSTUME

Dress for success. For men, that usually, but not always, means a business suit with color-coordinated shirt, tie, and shoes. Women should choose a suit, dress, or other apparel considered appropriate for a business office setting. If you know that the context for your first meeting is more informal, then dress accordingly. If you're not sure, it's much better to err on the side of conservatism to avoid having your costume damage the critical first impression you are about to make.

SKELETON FORMAT FOR A SCRIPT

It is advisable to construct a script that will take no longer than 20–25 minutes to deliver. In general, your contact—not you—should be the one to extend the meeting beyond the time you said it would take to deliver your message.

Because you have a relatively short time in which to make all your key points and to collect key information, your first meeting requires a carefully constructed, prepared, and well-rehearsed script.

With occasional exceptions, the following sequence of tasks will serve as a useful outline.

- Engage in ice-breaking conversation as seats are taken. Comment on the attractiveness of the office or a particularly stunning piece of artwork.
- Explain how you chose this organization and this person to contact (referral, type of business, etc.).
- Describe the organization you represent, your role, and why you are there. A description of your role might be "to arrange employment opportunities for people with disabilities who are qualified and eager to work."

- Describe your services by focusing on how those services can benefit the potential employer. This topic is the one about which the employer is most interested; therefore, it should represent the bulk of your total script.
- In almost every instance, an employer's central concern is with obtaining good, if not superior, additions to his or her work force. You must, therefore, stress qualities of your general clientele that harmonize with this basic employer need.
- Next, briefly describe the other services you and your organization can deliver as part of an employer account relationship. Your preliminary research will dictate the order and attention you give to each service you can capably provide. Mention that these services are provided at no cost to the employer, but that you expect the employer to give serious consideration to hiring the people you represent as the account relationship develops.
- Offer to leave the information packet you brought and to send requested information, past performance data, and supportive literature.
- Ask if the employer has further questions about the services available through an employer accounts relationship.
- If a "next step" is agreeable, establish lines of further communication. A next step could be a presentation to a group of managers, approval from the union steward, or discussion of the implications of an account with personnel officers.
- Request a time and contact for a tour of the employer's operations either that day or another in the near future. Indicate that you'll request a follow-up meeting to discuss more tangible ways you and your organization can be of assistance after you digest the information you acquire on the tour.

FEATURES OF A TAILOR-MADE PRESENTATION

The extent to which you are able to tailor-make a script for a presentation to a particular employer depends on the information you turned up during your preliminary research about the employer's products or services and its economic, labor, and management environment. How the script is customized rests on the type of negotiation you anticipate. If you organized pertinent information in a format similar to the one suggested in Chapter III, the construction of a tailor-made script should be fairly straightforward.

The following are some tips to keep in mind:

Write out and practice your script.
Because you have only a limited amount of time to deliver your sales pitch, it's essential that you get across all the important selling points within the time you requested. The only way to be certain you can do that is to write your script ahead of time. By practicing with a tape recorder, and then with a friend or colleague, you will enter the real meeting with confidence that you're prepared to make your points in a positive, enthusiastic manner.

Expect questions and objections.
The greater the likelihood you're entering a Show-Me Negotiation, the greater the odds you'll be confronted with objections to, and questions about, the employer's needs for the people and services you represent. You must be prepared to respond to probable objections and questions in ways that strengthen the perception that what you offer may, in fact, be beneficial after all, and you're as knowledgeable about your business as the other person is about his or hers.

Don't try to fake it.
You'll be interacting with pros who are approached every day by people who have something to sell. It will be obvious to them when you are trying to cover up your lack of specific information.

Fortunately, a respected part of being knowledgeable is knowing how to get answers to questions. Rather than trying to fake an answer, it's much better to say,

> That's a good question. I don't have the answer now, but I'll make a note and get back to you with the information within a week.

Or,

> I'll be able to answer that question better after I've had a chance to tour your operations and talk with your production people.

Bring up key questions yourself.
Your case is vulnerable when you're placed in a defensive position. Try to anticipate the questions that might otherwise put you on the defensive and be prepared to answer them in your script. You can expect, for example, a question about the cost of employing people with disabilities. At the appropriate spot in your script you might include a statement such as,

> You're probably wondering what your costs would be. Although there is no charge for the services we provide, there may be costs associated with making your jobs accessible for some employees with disabilities. The national experience is that these costs are generally negligible. If not, however, there are tax incentive and wage subsidy programs in place to help you recoup unusual costs. We can help you take advantage of those programs as part of our services.
>
> More important, perhaps, is the fact that stable, reliable, safety-conscious employees—the type of people we represent—reduce turnover and disability insurance costs. Right now I can think of two people who are ready to go to work in your word processing center where, I understand, you've had some problems with turnover and absenteeism.

Ask informed questions about the employer's business.
The time for you to ask questions is usually right after you've described the services you have to offer. The purpose of informed questions is to generate helpful information for future use, and to make clear to the employer that you have at least a rudimentary knowledge of the organization's products and operations. Don't ask questions such as, "What is it you folks do here at Canossa Corporation?" A question like that suggests laziness or that you asked for the appointment on a whim.

Here are two hypothetical examples of informed questions:

1. I know, of course, that Canossa is a national leader in the field of personal computers. Are your circuit boards stuffed here or abroad?
2. I understand that most of your employees are represented by the International Chip Workers, is that right? [If yes,] That's good, because the ICW National Council has a strong policy on supporting job opportunities for workers with disabilities, and I'm sure they would be very helpful in our efforts to assure those opportunities here at Canossa.

Notice that the second question is both informed and anticipates one of the employer's possible objections or excuses for stalling.

You will need to be prepared for other, often legitimate, objections the employer may have such as current economic conditions, not having the kind of jobs "the handicapped" can do, or the danger of the employer's jobs. The better your research, the better you'll be able to anticipate objections and have positive responses prepared in advance.

Stay calm at all times.
Poor attitudes on the part of employers is a vastly overrated excuse for the low employment status of people with disabilities. There may be times, however, when you are confronted with certain questions or objections that sound hostile or prejudicial to the clients or the organization you represent. Some of those comments may make you feel angry or defensive. If that happens, control your reactions, stay calm, and try to provide accurate information without preaching to or laying guilt on the other person. Model the kind of attitude and vocabulary you would want the other person to adopt. When you practice your script with a friend or colleague ahead of time, ask that person to try to throw you off with hostile or prejudicial objections.

Script-building gets easier and less time-consuming with practice, feedback from others, and self-scrutiny. Like any script for a part in a play, however, the audience's reaction is the final arbiter of quality and effectiveness. If you keep polishing your script and your performance, your particular audience will become increasingly responsive to sharing your goals.

THE FIRST MEETING
This section covers certain recommended steps to take immediately before, during, and after your first meeting with a prospective employer.

Review a Final Checklist. Just as an airline pilot goes through a final checklist right before take-off, it's advisable for you to review your own checklist the day before your first meeting with a potentially important employer. The following section contains a checklist you might want to use or adapt.

PRE-MEETING CHECKLIST

- Will my schedule allow me to prepare myself mentally just before the meeting?
- Have I practiced my script?
- Is my presentation script concise, clear, and well organized?
- Do I know how long my presentation will take (accurate within one minute)?
- What information do I want to get from my contact?
- How will I ask for that information?
- Have I identified employer needs to address in the presentation?
- How will I establish our capacity to meet those needs?
- Are my promotional materials neat, up-to-date, and well organized?
- What written information (brochures, pamphlets, testimonial letters) do I want to leave behind?
- How will I ask for a tour of the operations?
- How am I going to ask for referrals to other employers?
- Will my appearance (dress, grooming, props) create a positive first impression?
- Do I have crisp, clean business cards, and will they be handy?
- Have I done a critique of my last presentation and made appropriate changes and additions?

Arrive Early. Always plan on arriving about 15 minutes early for your appointment. It is not good form to be late or to rush in rumpled and out of breath.

Give yourself a few minutes to relax in the car before going in. Make a final review of your presentation, and check your appearance.

Allow yourself five or ten minutes in the reception room. Scan informational literature you find there (industry magazines, company brochures). Make note of the ones you want to add to your research stock. Become acquainted with the secretary and probe for useful information if he or she is not too busy.

Schedule Free Time After Your Meeting. Allow some slack in your day's schedule to adjust for delays in the starting time for your meeting, to allow the other person to prolong your time together for discussions, and to take a tour should it be offered immediately.

Break the Ice But Get to the Point. Most likely, the person with whom you're meeting will want you to get to the point quickly. However, as you are settling in to your seat, it's fine to open the conversation with safe small talk. Be pleasant, but remember that humor is risky.

Make the Presentation from Memory. One reason for practicing your presentation is to avoid having to refer to notes; dependence on notes is amateurish, shows a lack of self-confidence, and tends to interfere with your ability to be flexible and adaptable to cues from the other person. It's all right to take notes during the meeting, especially if you ask for permission early on.

Document the Results of the Meeting. It's imperative that you write a file memo describing the meeting results within a day after the meeting. The memo should describe basic information (date, place, person with whom you met), what you learned, and agreements reached (what information you promised to provide subsequent to the meeting, future meetings, tour dates, and contact person, etc.). Record any names mentioned in the meeting that could be of future value. You may want to file separately a self-critique of your presentation.

Always Send a Follow-up Letter. Follow-up letters are part of established business manners. The letter should be sent within two days following your meeting and should include:

- appreciation for the person's time and the opportunity to describe your services;
- any promised information;
- a summary of any agreements reached (next meetings, promises you made to maintain telephone communication, people you are to contact, etc.); and,
- appreciation for employer referrals, by name.

Don't forget, a follow-up letter is required even if the meeting was not productive from your point of view. In your business, you can't afford to burn any bridges!

Possibly the most important thing to keep in mind throughout the entire process of preparing for your first encounter is that you will influence the atmosphere of the interaction. If you give the impression of a person who is friendly, competent, well-prepared, candid, enthusiastic about the services you offer, and eager to work persistently on solving whatever problem stands in the way of a successful negotiation, you can reasonably expect the other person to respond in kind.

To know all things is not permitted.

Horace (65–8 B.C.)

THE DOOR IS OPEN! WHAT NOW?

The employer accounts strategy represents a positive response to questions and problems that attend the long-range policy goal of expanding the number of employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. This small book was designed to address some of the many issues related to opening doors to the negotiation of good jobs for people with disabilities through a vehicle called employer accounts. We hope the content proves useful to the audience for which it was intended.

But the conclusion of this book only represents the closing of the first act in the continuing story about creating and maintaining jobs—productive relations with significant employers.

The creative maintenance of employer accounts requires additional personnel skills, agency capacities and commitments, and new interdependencies among various segments of the community-at-large.

Many answers to "What Now?" and solutions to organizational stresses that the accounts strategy generates are emerging from the experiences of people currently working within the strategy's theme. But a great deal remains to be learned. We leave you to the task of discovering those next-step answers and solutions, either from others or from the results of your own experiments with the employer accounts strategy.

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